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## **Purchase Personalities: Stories of Individuals and Families: The Dickson Family Tree**

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## The (Dickson) Family Tree

By

Iva Lassiter Hooker

*Editor's note: Charlene Groves provided the story on the Dickson family and the information below. We appreciate her efforts and thank her for the contribution.*

The Dicksons are part of my husband's family, not mine, but I am the person who has done the family research. It would be nice if you could locate some of J.B. Dickson's direct descendents. Have you tried? There is a Roy Dickson, in Bartlesville, OK, who is descended from the older brother James Alexander, who did a Dickson genealogy. I think he is the source of the death dates, etc., of the J.B. Dickson family. But, the last I heard from him, he seemed to have gotten most of his info. on the J.B. Dickson's from the document I sent you (which I photocopied for him). I have some question about some of his stuff: he re-arranges facts sometimes to put his branch of the family in a better light - sometimes to the discredit of other branches. However, he apparently went to various courthouses and found info. I did not know existed.

Charlene Groves

(This account was written by B.F. Dickson, my beloved cousin, but was (unfinished) at the time of his death. This information was compiled by Cousin Frank during the 1930's ... possibly in the late 30 's ... he passed away in 1941. ... I typed it from his notes written in longhand on

tablet paper ... I value it highly and hope that whoever reads it will handle it with care, I consider it very precious information. /s/ Iva Lassiter Hooker)

The writer makes no claim of superior wisdom or skill in writing but in response to the request of members of my father's and mother's family, and to discharge a long felt duty, we undertake the task of setting down on paper what information we have concerning the two illustrious families from which my father's house was builded and leave on record what I know, for the benefit others, who may desire to know something of "Our Family Tree".

We begin the task conscious of limited information and scant material for such historical work. The facts set down will be as near the truth as we can make them from the information we have.

We have from the old Bible of the Lassiter family names and dates of births and deaths, but much of the matter is from memory as I heard it related by my Father and Mother and other relatives, among the older members of the family.

### **The Dickson family**

Alexander was grandfather Dickson's name and Elizabeth was grandmother's given name, but

I do not know her maiden name. Know nothing of the date and place of their marriage.

Their family consisted of six children, two sons and four daughters as follows: The daughters were Nancy, Peggy, Zilphia and Polly. The sons, James A. and John Baker.

We know nothing of the home life or surroundings of my father's home or whatever became of the plantation on which the family lived.

Nancy, the oldest daughter, was first married to a Mr. Hunt, who in a short time left to attend to some business and never returned --nothing was ever heard from him. In those early days communication was difficult, and little law and organized government existed. Men were robbed and killed and nothing was ever known or done about it. She never heard from him, do not know how long she remained a widow, but some years later she was married to Mr. Alex Baker -- one son was born to them. After his (father's) death the son was married to Miss Susan Fulbright. To them two children were born, Billie and Ellen; they still survive -- Mr. W.A. Baker, Detroit, Texas, and Mrs. Ellen Fortner, Fulbright, Texas. Mrs. Susan Baker, after the death of Mr. Baker was married to Mr. Jim Miller and several children were born to them.

My aunt, Mrs. Nancy Baker, left a widow, was married to Mr. Bill Guest. Mr. Guest died and



she remained a widow until her death in 1881. My father built a house for her in his front yard where she lived until her granddaughter, Ellen Baker, was married to Jim Fortner, and she moved with them to her farm on Guest's Prairie where she died in the year 1881, at a ripe age. Her hair for many years had been as white as the drifting snow.

Peggy Dickson was married to Mr. Bill Biggs. They lived in Stevensville, Erath County. Their children were Bill, Jim, Nannie and perhaps others.

It was my privilege to conduct a meeting at Morgan Mill some years ago. Jim Biggs, then 71 years of age, was converted and united with the church. Since then he has died.

Zilphia Dickson married Ed Groves and they lived near Farmersville. Their son, Ed, did live at Farmersville. Father and Mother visited them in 1907 and had a wonderful trip.

Polly Dickson married Mr. Mart Guest. They lived southwest of Detroit on the edge of the prairie. Their children were Lish, Bill, Mart and Sarah, who married Jack Garner and was the mother of seven children – Jim, John Nance, was a member of Congress for 30 years and was elected Vice-president of the United States in 1932, Lee, Julia, Maude, Jessie and Jolly.

Mart married Miss Nannie Green, both are dead, but they left a large family of children – Harvey, Mttie, Emma, Alex, Lem, Landers, Robert

and Russ. Aunt Polly's other children had families but I do not know about them.

After Aunt Polly's death Uncle Mart Guest married and had other children, Essie and George. Their mother's name was Elizabeth Icenhower. Uncle Mart and his last wife have been dead many years.

James A Dickson, father's brother married, but I do not know his wife's name. They had seven children – Jim, Mart\*, Mal, Lee\*, Clay, Clint and Margaret. Their mother died and the boys came and for a time lived with my father and mother. The girl went to live with Aunt Nancy Guest. The girl married Jim Camp and her first child was born before she was thirteen years of age. Two other children, Lizzie and Watson were born to them..

\*(On the 1850 census, the Ed Groves family and the James Dickson family are on adjoining farms in Lamar County. On the 1870 census, Mart is living in Collin County in the household of Ed and Zilpha Groves and is married to their daughter Nancy. Leroy, his brother, is also in this household.)

Their first son, Alex, when about two years old was lost in Sulphur bottom for two days and nights. He tried to follow his father who went to the creek for a barrel of water. The whole country was aroused and searching parties were formed to search the woods for the child. There were many

wild beasts and the nights were cold. Hope was soon lost of finding the child alive. The second night the men went abreast with lights and close enough together to see or hear the child. Late in the night the whimper of the child was heard and in under the brush by an old log the child lay and the people rejoiced. Nothing had harmed him and as soon as he was warmed and given nourishment he was fine and made a big man.

Uncle Jim Dickson was killed in a blacksmith shop near Detroit many years ago by a man named Dock Harmon. In 1926 a man by the name of Walker, who lived near Deport, told me he witnessed the killing which took place in his father's shop.

Uncle Jim's children are all dead, those by his first wife. After her death he married again and other children were born, two sons, one a preacher lived for a long time in Paris. But his grandchildren and great-grandchildren live in the east and west of this great country. To show how widely they are scattered – Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, National Committee Woman lives in Los Angeles, California; Mrs. Dr. Blunt lives in Washington, D.C. and others in south and central Texas and some in Oklahoma.

My Grandmother Dickson died November 20, 1840, and grandfather Dickson died Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 1847. They were buried somewhere in Tennessee, perhaps Henry County. Could have known all this

if I had only asked my father. Like many other duties, we wait until it is too late.

Mother's parents moved from North Carolina to Kentucky and settled in Calloway County. Mother's father, Britton Lassiter, son of Jessie and Clay Lassiter, was born January 15, 1792, and her mother, Susan Lassiter, daughter of Nicholas and Deborah Boon, was born January 9, 1800.

My mother's mother was related to Daniel Boon, the explorer and pioneer of Kentucky

...

My father, John B. Dickson, was the baby in grandmother Dickson's family, born June 7, 1826. He was a great mother's boy – seven years old when his mother weaned him. Old enough to be ashamed before company and would call his mother into another room. This was told of him. His mother finally told him she was going to wean him and that he was too old to carry on so. He went out and sat on the door step and soliloquiesed thus, "it is mine, they can't take it from me, I am going to have it." I know but little of my father's childhood and homelife. His mother died when he was fourteen years of age.

He left home as a young man and entered the U.S. Army in the war with Mexico and served with Gen. Zacharia Taylor. He enlisted in the 16<sup>th</sup>

U.S. Infantry at Murray, Calloway County, Kentucky in June, 1845, and served through the entire Mexican War. He was in the engagements of Monterey and Mexico City.

After the war he returned to Murray, Kentucky and helped build the old County Court House. It was constructed of square bricks. The old court house was finally torn down and the bricks were used in paving the streets. Some years ago, while on a visit to Murray, they dug up one of the square bricks from the streets and I brought it home with me to keep, just because my father had helped to build them into the court house – the brick is eight inches square and about two inches thick.

Perhaps while working in Murray my father met my mother who was then a young lady in her teens and their courtship began. I know absolutely nothing as to the length of time of engagement. Surely no time was wasted for before Miss Emily Jane had reached her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday they were ready to consummate their affair in marriage.

It should be said, however, at this time, her father and mother were both dead, the mother having died August 1, 1848, and her father October 30, 1848. The older sisters were married and had homes of their own.

Mother and two older brothers lived for a time in the old home. She kept the two younger children, Aunt Mattie and Uncle Lem, until the

court took them from her and placed them under a guardian. This almost broke her heart, Mother pictured a very touching scene in the old home just after they returned from the burial of her mother. Her father held the baby, my Uncle Lem, in his arms, he turned to her and said, "Jane, the little baby don't have any mother now," it broke her heart. She ran to him, put her arms around him and said, "I'll be his mother now." From then on she took the baby into her bed and he slept in her arms every night until the court took him from her and placed him and the little sister under the care of a guardian. This almost broke her heart and left her in the big house with only two of the older brothers. Just how long they thus lived I do not know.

...

When father and mother were ready to marry, Mother was too young under the Kentucky laws, so they, with a group of young people got into a boat, crossed the Tennessee River to the Tennessee side, their purpose accomplished and no law violated.

...

I do not know just where in Calloway County they located to begin their married life, but

somewhere in the country where my father farmed making tobacco the chief crop.

January 10, 1852, a little daughter, Susan Elizabeth Ann, was born and for 18 months she made their lives and home happy and bright, but death called this little darling away July 10, 1853, and her ashes repose in the Lassiter Family burying ground a few yards from the old home where mother was born and raised. I visited this silent sacred place while visiting in Kentucky, some years ago, many of the Lassiter connections and old friends of the family are buried there. It was considerably grown up in brush, briars, and some large trees, but few of the graves have markers to tell the names of people resting there.

...

Let's go back to the new home so recently bereaved of their first born. Time moved on and the second child, James Alexander, was born November 27, 1853.

### Coming to Texas

Years before, a number of father's people had come to Texas and settled on what is known as Guest's Prairie; suppose the prairie took its name from them, and by the close of 1853, father had his plans made to try the wilds and the wilderness of

the West. So when my little brother was but three weeks old they started with all of their possessions to the far away Texas. Travel was slow and made with great difficulty in those days.

Their possessions consisted of their household goods and the unsold tobacco crop which was boxed and shipped. The move almost broke Mother's heart to leave her people and all she had ever known and come so far, and among a people she absolutely knew nothing of.

Her baby sister and brother came to spend a week with her before she left. When they separated at the end of the visit, it was forty years before they met again.

Travel was difficult, there were no railroads or good roads in that day. They went by water to New Orleans, then back up the Mississippi River to 'Shreveport, and from there up the Red River to Jefferson, Texas. On the voyage to New Orleans they were given the fright of their lives. It was Christmas time. Two boats were going down the river, the captains were both drunk and began to race with each other. The passengers felt death eminent. Father buckled life preservers on mother and himself and took the three week old baby in his arms ready to combat the waves in an effort to save them from watery graves. It was made worse by being at night. Finally, one boat began to gain and as it rushed by plowing the foaming waters,



struck the other one tearing away the wheelhouse, but no life was lost.

They finally reached Jefferson and by private conveyance came on to Red River County, and lived the first year east of Detroit about two miles left of the highway just east of the Joe Lee Roberts place. Of course at that time there was no railroad through the county. For a long time Detroit was known as Bennett Station. What it was called before the Texas & Pacific Railroad built through I do not know. The timber is all cleared away and the place where they lived is now in a farm. I have passed by the place before the change was made.

From this place they moved out to the edge of the prairie near Old Starksville where they lived for three or four years. While living there they lost their home and most of its contents by fire.

### Little house on the edge of the prairie

The house was typical of those days. It consisted of one room, porch in front, and a "lean to" or shed room behind, with no door or window except the door leading into the living room. The night was cold, a stiff north wind was blowing and things were frozen. They were aroused from their sleep by the roaring of the flames. Father hurriedly carried the family to safety and as much things as he could get out. He ran back into the

side room to get his saddle, as I remember, and while in there the roof fell in leaving no way to escape except through the solid wall. With no axe to batter off the planks, he backed back as far as possible, drew his head into his shoulders and ran against the wall with such force as to make an opening sufficient to escape threatened death in a furnace of fire. Mother was burned and blistered about the shoulders but did not realize it until next morning when she went to turn in the bed and discovered the bedclothes stuck to the blisters. A neighbor family had taken them in out of the wintery blast.

Most of the household goods were lost. Mother said in running out with the feather bed, the tick was hung on something and badly split and the raging wind carried the feathers for miles down the prairie and scattered them everywhere. To her sorrow the quilts that were carried out caught fire and burned.

This was a great loss to a young couple in a new country among strangers and just starting out in life. I tremble to think of them without house or home away from all they had ever known and the wilds of the far west.

Many experiences came to them while living in the little house by the edge of the prairie. One of the exciting moments of mother's life came here. Wild cattle in great herds roamed the big prairie. It was really dangerous to encounter them.

The Kentucky Baby, my little brother, was now walking. They had a big shepherd dog that thought much of the baby. One morning mother, busy with her work for a while forgot the baby. When she went to see about him, he was nowhere to be found about the house. She heard the bark of the dog out on the prairie, and started in a run. When near enough to see, a large number of wild cattle were standing with heads high, and she could see the old dog running in a circle barking, soon she could hear the cry of the lost boy, whose dress was caught by a wild rose briar. The cows were excited. Mother untied her apron, began waving it over her head and running toward the herd of cattle, they took great fright, whirled and ran back across the prairie. Mother grabbed the baby in her arms and ran home almost exhausted.

While living here, on the death of Uncle Jim's wife, his six sons came and for a time lived with father.

Also while here, great joy came to my mother. Her sister, Mrs. W.B. Smith and family came to see her and for a time all of them lived in the one room house. Mother had been so lonely in the west away from all her relations that the coming of Aunt Esther was like the dawning of a brighter day after the gloom and shadows of the dreary past.

Before leaving this little home of the 1850's wrapped in the folds of the dim distant past to be

forgotten, let us look again into the home life here at the time of the aunt's visit to this early home.

Mother cooked on the fire. When the meal was prepared the table was drawn out from the corner, the spread made, all ate. The table returned to the corner, the dishes washed and everything put in place. It should be stated here that Father had a hired man, Joe Kept. Mother had three children, Aunt Esther had three children, making eleven to sleep in the one room. Mother had one of the old fashioned high beds held together by the bed cord and a trundle bed for the children which slipped under her bed. Let's look in while mother fixed the beds for the family.

The trundle bed is pulled out and prepared for the children, then the hired man's bed is made on the floor under mother and father's bed. On the remaining floor space beds were made for Aunt Esther and her family.

Mother related an episode of one night while they thus slept – in the middle of the night brother Johnnie cried out, cramps had seized his stomach. Father arose, took him by the arm and started for the door, stepping over floor sleepers. Just as he passed over Uncle Bill's head it developed he had started too late for the door, when Uncle Bill exclaimed, "My God, John," and rushed to the wash pan for water and rags. The whole family was aroused from their slumbers and quite a little time passed before all had settled down for the

balance of the night. Don't know how long they lived here in their little house on the prairie at the edge of the big woods.

Uncle Bill was a tanner by trade and wanted to live where he could have access to the timber and get bark for tanning purposes. Casting about for a suitable location, they decided to settle on tracts of land about one mile south of the Cuthand Creek and ten miles south from Clarksville. This brought the two families down to the Pine Branch community where they located and built their homes.

Uncle Bill put in a tan yard on what is now known as the Abbie Carter place. Father settled on the tract just north of Uncle Bill, where he pre-empted a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres. Here father and mother lived for many years and reared a large family. This was prior to the Civil War. The country was unsettled and few families lived in the big woods.

Father with his axe felled the trees and hewed his house and farm from the wilderness-like country. The woods were full of wild turkey, squirrels, deer and other animals. Mother said she had at one time counted from her door 27 deer feeding about. At that time the trees were large and scarcely no undergrowth. It was easy to see quite a distance. The streams of water were full of fish. Hogs fattened on the mast and the range was fine for the stock. It was easy for them to have the

best meats and all the fish and fowl they desired. They did not have much money but at that time it did not require so much.

## War Between the States

Father put out fruit trees in the woods before they moved and soon they had plenty of nice fruit, from this early planting some of the trees lived more than forty years. During the early years of this pioneer home the cruel war between the States broke out in 1861. The South called for men. March 10, 1862, father enlisted in Capt. John M. Bivin's Company H, Whitfield's Legion, serving some time in Whitfield's command. He was transferred to Gould's 23<sup>rd</sup> Texas Cavalry, Capt. M.L. Sim's Company where he served until the end of the war. For four years he endured the hardships of a Confederate soldier. He engaged in some of the fierce battles of the war. He was neither captured or wounded. A bullet passed through his cap and graised the skin on the top of his head.

Only those who passed through those trying years know anything of the trials, hardships and sorrows of those awful days. When father went away to the war Mother was left with the little children and no protection.

A negro lad had been working some for father. When Father was ready to go to the war he

said to this boy (whose name I remember was Dan), "Dan, I want you to take care of Miss Jane and the little children while I am gone, don't let anything harm them." The black boy promised and mother said he would have fought to defend her.

She had a lonely life and many trying experiences. Perhaps I should stop to relate them as mother told them to me. The house was built of logs chinked and dobbed. Near the front door some of the chinking had fallen out. One night as she and the children lay on the floor sleeping she heard someone step on the front porch floor. She very quietly crawled up to the crack in the wall and peeped out. A man was standing near the door. She had no gun, but the butcher knife was in the kitchen. She crawled in there and got the knife and came back to the children, ready to fight to the death if he came in. He stood there for a while, then turned away and left. She was never sure just who it was but had her opinion.

Another exciting moment came one day at the little home. A woman neighbor was spending the day with her. They heard a commotion among the chickens. Looking out they saw a very large rattler coming toward the house and a bunch of the chickens pecking at him. The snake's head was raised a few inches. Mother knew it would never do to let it get under the house, so she told the lady to stay in the room and keep the children while she

went out to battle with the snake. She placed the hoe handy, then she ran to the fence which was build of rails, took one as large as she could manage, went as close to the snake as she dared to do and pitched the rail across its back. While it was trying to get from under the rail she seized the hoe and cut its head off. This was a great victory.

Another trying experience to mother was the death of Billie Schumach, a young man who lived in the community. The grist mill was some miles away. Brother Jimmie, the oldest child, carried the corn to the mill to get meal. He would go in an ox wagon. On one occasion Billie Shumach accompanied him on the trip. The weather was hot and on the way they ate some wild plums. Billie became very sick and by the time they got home he was deathly sick, suffering from congestion as they thought then. Perhaps now it would be called acute indigestion. Mother did all she could for the poor sick homeless boy, but he grew worse and worse. Mother sent my brother to Mr. Stout's home a mile away for some of the men to come but before the coming of the morning Billie was gone and his body was buried on the Stout Hill to await resurrection morning. In this quiet spot on the hillside rests the bodies of others who in those early days closed life's brief day. Among them, my little brother Lemuel Jackson, one of the twins, and Mrs. Masters, grandmother of sister Genie, brother John's wife, await the coming of the Lord.



The days and experiences of the terrible Civil War can never all be told. Only our mothers who skimped and struggled through those dark days know what it all means. They drank the cup to its bitter dregs.

My mother's lot was hard and lonely during those trying years ... four small children when father was called away and the twins, Mary Ester and Lemuel Jackson, born after he left for the war. The wonder is how she did get along and keep the children home together. How I wish I could hear and write from her own lips the story of the four years experience with the problems of life and her little family – what courage, what persistence, what patience only God knows.

She had to get the cotton and wool, card and spin the rolls to get the thread out of which to weave the cloth for their clothes. The South could not clothe her soldiers and Mother had to make father's clothes and send them to him. God bless the memory of the women of the South and may their noble deeds be a inspiration to generations yet unborn.

There were some conditions that contributed to mother's victory over the hardships. Father had hogs and they multiplied. The mast was sufficient to fatten the hogs and this gave meat and lard. Father set out fruit trees in the woods before he moved to the place and this gave fruit and the

woods were full of game and the streams swarmed with fish.

As my mind dwells on this, the darkest period in our history, I can hardly believe my day is removed but five years from the closing of this civil conflict.

The war over, father returns to his little family and all but destroyed home, with courage to face disaster on every hand and undertake the rebuilding of his home. He had no corn for bread, the children were hungry. A neighbor had corn but refused to sell. Father told the man his children were hungry and he was going to get a turn of corn. He went for his gun and the man said, "get the corn".

The years passed, the children grew stronger and able to help, and father with the help of hired labor cleared more land and year by year extended the farm. More fruit trees, apples, peaches, plums and pears were set out – also grape vines, figs and other fruit bearing plants. Marvelous and wonderful, the varieties and quantity of luscious fruits that grew in abundance at my childhood home.

Other children were born to the home and the number grew to twelve, six boys and six girls – Julia Frances, Berry Franklin, J.B., Hontas L., and Charles W., the baby in the family.

August 23, 1866, sorrow comes again. Jackey, the little twin brother was called to death,

being just a little more than four years of age. His little body rests on the slope of the hill a little more than one mile northeast of our old home. Mother said his death almost killed father. He walked the floor and pulled his hair ... how death rends our hearts and breaks our homes.

Time marches on and the family went forward in clearing the land and building the home under the privations of the early days.

Deep sorrow settled again upon the home August 20, 1873. Julia Frances, my little eight year old sister died. I was not yet four years of age. Her death is the first impression my childhood memory recalls. I did not understand the crowd and what it all meant, but mother sat weeping and I asked her what was the matter and she told me "your sister has died and gone to heaven." I thought it must be some far away place, but from that time it seems I've had a desire to go to that place. I still have my little chair she used to sit in, rock and sing to me.

By this time the White Oak Baptist Church near Garvinsville had been built and a cemetery ground laid off. Here her body was buried, being among the first. Father built of brick and mortar a vault over her grave that stood for many years. Finally it was removed and a tombstone marks her grave. The stone also has the names of Susan Elizabeth Ann, the little sister who died in

Kentucky and Lemuel Jackson, the little twin brother buried on Stout's Hill near the old home.

### The Homeplace

The construction of the home was of the Southern type. The house faced the north, a large story and a half. The walls were built of broad hewn logs chinked and dobbed with the front door in the middle, windows on the right and left. Just inside the front door were the steps leading to the stairs. About six steps up there was a square landing and the steps turned by the east wall to the upper floor. Under this landing was a closet. Under the second flight of stairs was a door in the east wall.

The brick chimney was in the west with a wonderful fireplace, with a mantle board painted black. A door in the south wall led to the dining room which was the full length of the big living room and I suppose eight or ten feet wide. There was a window in the living room east of the door leading into the dining room, also a window and door in the south dining room wall. Mother kept a bed in the east end of the dining room and the large dining table occupied the west end and on the north side of the table was the long bench upon which we sat to eat.

The kitchen continued west in line with the dining room, but five or six feet wider. The wall

separating the two rooms was about five feet from the end of the kitchen floor. The door was in the middle. On the left was the safe, handy to the table, and to the right was an open space where the sugar barrel and other things were placed. On the corner of the long wall was the old coffee mill where we ground the roasted coffee day after day.

To the north of the middle of the west kitchen wall was the door and the south wall had the window. The cookstove stood near the west wall about the middle with just room enough for the wood box behind the stove. Just south of the kitchen was one of the big brick cisterns. The smoke house was about 20 steps west and the big garden south.

I do not know what the date of the building of this first unit of our home, but about 1870 or soon after, my father added to the building. On the east of the old building he added a large room and a small room to the south, an eight foot hall extended between the two units and an eight foot porch extended east and west the full length of the two buildings on the north.

The new building had a door and two windows in the north, a brick chimney and two windows in the east and a door in the south leading into the south room. The south room had a door in the south wall leading out into the back yard.

At the northeast corner of this building was the other cistern laid in brick and cement just like a

jug. This building was of pine lumber. The carpenter, Mr. Lut Smith, dressed the lumber by hand and made all of his mouldings. He was a long time building, making doors, mantle and all. The mantle was beautiful. The new building made a great impression on the smaller children and for many years we spoke of it as "the new house".

There was a large front yard with large oaks, cedars, flowering shrubs and vines, many old fashioned roses. The west part of the yard had grass. The back yard was level and smooth as a floor, had beautiful shade trees and one of the prettiest elms I ever saw which was set in the yard by brother Johnnie. There were two mulberrys, a large post oak and two pear trees. Beautiful fruit trees were on ever hand.

In the southeast corner of the back yard stood the grainery and the farm spread out north and south, east and west. Are you surprised to hear me say the fairest and dearest place in all the world to me is this, my childhood home!

About fifty yards to the northeast stood the barn and buildings for the stock, and north the cow pens, grass lot and pool of water and a number of beautiful shade trees. West of the pool by the north lane stood the horse drawn cotton gin where cotton from the farm and farms of the neighbors was ginned. A lane led west and one led east from the old house and one to the north.

Reference has been made to the house father built for his widowed sister, Aunt Nancy. It occupied the northwest corner of the front yard. It faced east, porch in front, chimney in the north and side room on the west. Mother could sit on our front porch and talk to Aunt Nancy on her porch. The porches were near each other ... we called them galleries in those days.

Volumes could be written of the happenings of those happy days. The older brothers and sisters were now grown and our home was a great place for young people to gather and many visitors and guests were entertained. Father provided an abundance of food and mother was a wonderful cook, surely none excelled her in her day.

Uncle Lem Lassiter, Mother's baby brother, came out from Kentucky and lived with us for fifteen years and taught school in the county. Oh, what a joy for mother to have him with her!

In those days farmers had workings such as house raisings, rail splitting, log rollings, cotton picking, and such. The women put in quilts, cooked big dinners and everybody worked hard that day and would have a party that night. Father, like others, had such workings. They told me of a certain cotton picking he gave. Sister Mattie had a young gentleman friend coming to the working and she wanted to fix me up for the occasion. So far, I had only dresses, so she made for me a suit, waist and trousers like boys wore in those days.

She dressed me up that morning but I was naughty ... fell down and kicked and squawled for my dress until the suit was removed and the dress which extended down to my ankles was donned.

Through the passing of the years there were many experiences through which this big family passed, some of them sad, some joyful, some exciting. Some of the children were now grown, others were young. In all twelve children, six boys and six girls were born to this home. Nine of them lived to be grown. It was really a big family. Father always had hired labor and this added to the number. We had many guests, friends of the family and our home was a stopping place for the traveling public in those days. Cooking and serving was a problem, but father provided an abundance of food, mother was an artist in the kitchen and to eat once at her table gave one the desire to return ever and anon.

## Two Weddings

A new experience came when it became known two of the children were to be married. Mother did not have one to spare and would have kept them all under her roof could her wishes be carried out. Brother Johnnie was to marry Miss Eugenia Leach and sister Mattie was to marry Mr. Charles DeWitt Graham. They decided to have a double wedding at our home and the day set for the



wedding was to be Wednesday, November 13, 1878, and preparations began for the event .

I was but a little child, as small boy of eight years, but sister was thoughtful of me and took me aside and told me of her coming marriage and departure from our home.

All of the kin folks for miles around, the neighbors and friends of the families connected were invited. Father killed a hog, perhaps a beef, and other ... and the girls and the young ladies who came and composed the house party were busy for days cooking and decorating for the event. Nothing like this had ever taken place in our home and nothing was left unturned.

Miss Leach, my new sister to be, came Sunday and spent the rest of the time in our home. One of her friends, who lived near Depart, Miss Ida Bowyer, who made Genie's wedding dress, was there to spend the week and help get them ready.

The appointed day dawned and everything was soon astir putting the final touch on everything. Mother had things going in the kitchen, pies, cakes, and meats of different kinds and all the trimmings that go with them were in abundance. The cakes were white as snow, hours were spent in decorating the cakes and making decorations for the table, which was set in the wide hall which extended through the house some 28

feet. Near the south end a curtain was placed and from behind that the waiters served.

Long before night the guests began to arrive and before night fall the house and yard were filled with relatives and friends. Bro. J.A. McCulloch, a princely looking man with long beautiful white beard, pastor of the Baptist Church at White Oak, was there to perform the ceremony.

The marriages took place in the East Room. The couples entered from the south room; Mr. Graham and Sister led the way and Brother Johnnie and Genie followed and stood behind the first couple. Brother McCulloch married Charley and Sister and they stepped aside and Johnnie and Genie stepped up between them and were married. All this was a new experience at our house and my eyes were wide open.

The grooms were attired in the conventional black and were really handsome. Sister's dress was of sheer white Swiss, level in length, with three or four narrow fluted ruffles at the bottom of the skirt, and trimmings suitable on the bottom and sleeves. She made her dress. Sister Genie's dress was of cream cashmere made with medium train beautifully trimmed. They were so pretty and looked so pure and sweet and good.

After the wedding came supper. They gathered around the table to enjoy the feast father and mother had provided for their first children to marry. Have I ever seen anything so beautiful as

the table with its decorations, flowers, fruits, and candies and the many dishes of delicious foods and all the guests dressed in their best

All seemed happy and gay, but I walked into mother's room and she and Mrs. Garvin, Genie's mother, sat weeping over what they said was giving up their children. This broke my childish heart and I hurried back to the porch where I could see sister and sat down and cried, although I did not know what it was all about.

The newlyweds spent the night at Mother's. The next morning they went to Charley's home on the farm some three or four miles east of Garvins in Denison. Mrs. Graham prepared the dinner and sent it by the two sons, Alex and Edgar, who came to the wedding. Mr. And Mrs. Wilcox, Charlie's neighbors, took charge and had everything in order for the dinner. John and Genie returned in the evening and gave report of the wonderful dinner and brought samples, especially of the cake which was delicious

## 1879

The year 1879 was one of trial to our home and family. In July twin boys were born to sister and Charley, both dying in a few hours. Sickness like a storm struck our family. I was stricken with spinal meningitis and lay (in bed) for weeks. As I began to improve Sister Ettie was attacked by an

abscess in the left side and lay for weeks at the point of death. Dr. Look was called in and lanced her side and she recovered. Then Charley, the baby, took phtisik (asthma) and suffered death for many weeks. All remedies failed to bring relief. Someone told them to take him to the woods before sun-up, stand him with his back to a white oak tree, bore a hole in the tree even with the top of his head, place a lock of hair in the hole, drive a peg in the hole and cut peg and hair off. Then take him away and not let him look back and as soon as he grew the least bit the illness would leave.

The old saying is "a drowning man will catch at a straw," so Father and sister Nannie took the boy to the woods one cool frosty morning and went through the process and soon the asthma left. What was the cure I do not know, but he got well. All in all it was a year of sore experience.

Time moved on and near the close of the year Brother Jimmie was married to Miss Cassie Dinwiddie , daughter of Dr. B.F. Dinwiddie and Mattie C. (Houk) Dinwiddie. She was a dear sweet girl, much loved by the members of our family. They built their home norwest of our house about half a mile, where brother went ahead building and clearing the farm.

All the sick continued to improve and the Dicksons moved on in the affairs of everyday life until the closing of the year when sorrow again visited our home. Charley Graham was taken ill

the last days of December and passed away just as the sun slipped behind the western hills on New Year's Day in 1880. His death was such a shock and all so sudden. A happy home was broken and hearts were mantled with sorrow. He was a man of fine physique and noble character, a Christian gentleman, member of the Presbyterian Church. In discussing death and other spiritual subjects with sister at some quiet moment, not at the time he died, he asked her if she outlived him to have "Jesus Lover of my Soul" sung while he was dying. She promised, so on this day when she saw him in the grip of death, remembering his request and her promise, she asked those present to sing. No one could raise their voice, so sister dropped to her knees beside his bed and in soft quiet voice sang so sweetly –

Jesus lover of my soul, let me to thy  
bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll, while the  
tempest still is high,  
Hide me, O, my Savior, hide, till the  
storm of life is past,  
Safe into thy haven guide, O receive  
my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none, hangs my  
helpless soul on Thee,

Leave, O, leave me not alone, Still  
support and comfort me.

All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my  
help from Thee I bring,

Cover my defenseless head, with the  
shadow of Thy wing.

He was buried in the White Oak Baptist cemetery January 2, 1880. Sister was crushed and did not live long enough to get over his death.

Things moved on in a general way. Sister moved back home and rented her place. The months passed by and in August, 1880, sister was given a baby girl which she named Charlie for her father. She really idolized the child and gave all her time to the care of the little baby girl.

The Graham family originally lived in Mississippi and owned a plantation in the bottoms near Grenada. Why after Mr. Graham's death they left the farm I do not know. Perhaps on account of the yellow fever which swept the country and killed many people. Anyway, they came to Texas and located in Denison. In 1880 they decided to move back to their farm. Mrs. Graham and the girls had not seen sister or the baby so they invited and urged sister to join them here in Clarksville and go with them to the old home in Mississippi. She accepted, met them at the train and started December 1, 1880.

On the same day, a baby boy was born to Brother Jimmie and his wife. They named him John Franklin for his grandfathers Dickson and Dinwiddie. The first baby boy attracted a lot of attention. Time moved on, Christmas came and passed. Father put me in school at Brewster where Uncle Lem Lassiter was teaching. I boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Griggs.

## FIRE

On Friday, February 11, 1881, I came home for a weekend. Saturday morning was real cold. A stiff north wind was blowing and things were frozen up. Mother tied up my ears and I hurried off to see the new baby and take some candy I had brought home. Buddie was in the woods clearing land, Cassie was dressing the baby, a big wood fire burned in the fireplace. Cassie sat to the right and I took a chair to the left of the fireplace. When she finished dressing the baby she brought him across and placed him in my arms, picked up the pan, walked to the porch to throw out the water, not knowing her clothing had ignited from the fire in the fireplace. The stiff wind kindled the flame and before she discovered the fire the flames burned the back of her neck. She ran through the room into the dining room, around the table, and thinking if she stayed in the house all of us would burn, she ran out into the yard where the high

north wind kindled the flames until she was a burning torch.

Brother heard her screams and started in a run thinking perhaps a mad dog was at the house as a mad dog scare was abroad, but seeing the smoke he dropped the axe that he might make better time. She saw him coming and started to meet him. He jumped the fence and gathered her into his arms thinking he would smother out the fire. This he could not do, so he ran for water, coming with a bucket of water, he threw it upon her and ran for another. While he went for the second bucket, she bowed to her knees, as he came through the house he picked up a quilt. He threw the water on her, wrapped the quilt around her, picked her up in his arms and carried her into the house and placed her in a chair.

I have never seen anything so pitiful, burned to a crisp, her teeth popping and she was shaking as if she had a chill. My hands were burned trying to tear off her burning clothes. Once she had fallen to the ground and rolled over and over it seemed the fire was out, but when she jumped to her feet it caught a flame again. Her heavy winter clothes were almost burned from her body. No tongue can describe such a scene and such suffering.

Buddie picked up the baby from the floor where I had left him, placed it on the bed, got the horn and went to the porch and blew a distress



signal. Father and family heard it and ran as fast as they could. Soon they arrived; the news spread and neighbors began to gather. Cassie's father was a doctor and lived only about a mile away and was soon there. Men were sent hurriedly to Clarksville for doctors and medicines and materials with which to treat her. All day Saturday, Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night they expected her to die at any moment and she felt she was at death's door, but Monday morning she revived and seemed better and apparently continued to improve for several days. That gave us hope of her recovery, but more than half of the surface of her body was badly burned and the doctors said she could not get well. She lingered eighteen days, dying March 1, 1881.

She was conscious the end would come soon and gave directions concerning the baby she was leaving and asked them to sing "O Sing to me of Heaven, when I am called to die." Death struck about 2 a.m. Her father saw the end near and asked them to sing. They gathered around her bed and began to sing, Uncle Lem Lassiter leading. Her father said, "daughter, do you hear the singing?" She turned her eyes up to where she could see and said "Uncle:, and while they sang she slipped out and away from her sufferings to be with Him who sympathizes with us and never leaves us alone.

In the golden glow of a sunny afternoon her body was laid to rest in White Oak cemetery at Cuthand to await the resurrection morning, when in the likeness and beauty of the Lord she shall arise. Thank God for that day and hour. What a joy it will be to see her again.

Brother and the baby came to mother's and mother took care of the baby until he was about six months old. Then, in keeping with Cassie's request her mother took him to keep a while, but he lived only two weeks.

Just about this time Aunt Nancy Guest, father's oldest sister died and was buried at Liberty, south of Detroit. Sister Mattie returned in May from her extended visit with the Grahams in Mississippi. We were all so happy to have her and the baby back again. She came before Buddie's baby died. I rode behind her on horseback to his burial.

The year of 1881 was a year of great sorrow for our home. In July sister was taken ill and lived only four days, dying the 18<sup>th</sup> of July and her baby girl and only child grieved and pined and sickened and died one week later, July 26, 1881. The whole family was heartbroken over the going of sister. Mother never really got over the sorrow to her dying day.

## Time moves on

Time moved on and we all grew older and many changes and experiences were noted in the Dickson family. During the Christmas of 1881, Brother Jimmie was married to Miss Minerva Josephine Patton of Cuthand and they moved into his home near us and began their life's journey.

Mrs. Patton, Josephine's mother, came to live with them and continued until her death which was seven or eight years later. Mrs. Patton was old and feeble for many years.

In the early 80's my older sisters were married. Sister Ettie was married to J. Lem Smith on October 31, 1883, and the following children were born to them. Susie, now Mrs. Lewis Eaves of Slaton, Texas; Eugenia, who died when about two years old; John Frank, married Pearl Fryar and lives on the homeplace; Eva, married Frank Ward and lives at Seagraves – she is now a widow; Roy, married Bernice Stevens and lives in Ft. Worth; Swan married Will Dunson and lives at Seagraves. Sister Ettie died July 5, 1904 and the baby, Charley, died in a few months. Lem Smith is still living and past 75 years old. He lives with his children. After Ettie's death he married Mrs. Parnie Barham who died in 1916.

Sister Nannie married J.A. Mankins on December 19, 1883 and lived near our home. Nine children were born to them. Eight boys and one

girl. The little girl, Emma, and five of her little brothers, Johnnie, Andrew, Bertie, Franklin, Oscar and Mark all died before they were four years of age. Sister Nannie worshipped them and it broke her heart to give up her babies. They all rest in a row in the Old Church Yard. Henry Britton married Annie Burk and lives in Floydada, Texas; Randall married Clara Stevens and they live at Loranze; Tim married Bess Haber and they live in Gladewater, Texas.

Sister Nannie wanted to be in a meeting with me and arranged for one at Mauldin School house. I came for the meeting and she had the opening prayer. She greatly enjoyed the meeting and praised the Lord. The last night of the meeting in her testimony she said she would be willing to give her life if it would help save her children and friends. Three weeks from that night the Master called and she passed to great reward on May 31, 1914. The last letter she wrote to me ended with these words, "I'll do what he bids me whatever the cost. I'll be a true soldier, I'll die at my post."

Andy, her husband, lived until January 3, 1922. He married Mrs. Ida Leatherwood some years before his death and she still lives at her home place.

Living as we did on the farm, no school was near us and father had to board the children out for most of their schooling. Along in the 80's, the neighbors got together and built a little school

house near Mr. Carroll's known as the Carroll school. All of us younger children attended school there. Some of the teachers were Mrs. Kidd, Miss Eugenia Armstrong, AB Gartner. Later the Pine Branch school was established which has grown into the present splendid school community with its substantial school building and teacherage.

More than sixty years ago one of father's nephews, Clay Dickson, wife and baby boy came to our home from Collin County. Clay and his wife were both sick of that dreaded disease, consumption. Father and mother took them into our home. Sis, Clay's wife, lived but two weeks and died. In one more week Clay died leaving their baby in our care. He grew to manhood, a splendid talented young man, a Christian and member of the Baptist Church.

The inherited disease siezed him with great violence and in a few months he passed to his reward at the age of 24 years. He wanted to live but knew he must die. He died in the triumphs of faith and his last message to us was "tell Frank to meet me in Heaven.". His heart was full of gratitude. He expressed to father and mother his appreciation of what they had done for him, taking him when he was homeless and helpless and giving him a home and caring for him until he was grown. He died January 18, 1896. We all loved Jim Clay, as we called him.

I was not at home when he died and when word came of his death, in the loneliness of my room and out of the sorrow of my heart the following words were penned:

When mother the children long since  
lost

Meets at the bank of the river just  
crossed

Glorious anthems of praise will arise,  
Ringing the vault of Heaven's bright  
skies.

When brothers and sisters in Heaven  
shall meet

And each tell the story of redemption  
complete

With trials and troubles and sorrows  
all o'er

They'll gladly embrace on that  
beautiful shore.

When husband wife their hands  
reclasp

And shout in their triumph  
deliverance at last

They'll sing in their gladness and join  
in the song

That will carol the praises of Jesus the  
Son.

When Jesus the Savior steps forth  
from the throne  
O, what a shout from the glorified  
throng  
Crowns and trophies all laid at his feet  
While millions in ecstasy His dear  
name repeat.

Many years ago Brother Johnnie and Genie moved from the farm to Bogata where he and Uncle Lem Lassiter engaged in the drug business, later putting in other merchandise – hardware and groceries perhaps. Brother's health began to fail and for years at times he suffered intense pain. Finally, the doctor advised an operation. He went to Memphis, Tennessee and was operated on and died late in 1903. Genie and I reached Memphis the day before the operation and Bro. J.H. Taylor (our pastor) arrived the following morning – about 3 hours after Brother John passed away.

What a sad experience. How sad the trip home to mother, father and family. It had been 22 years since sister Mattie left us, but not so long, in ten months, sister Ettie was called home leaving her family and all. Then Charley lived but a few months and then died to be with the mother who he loved so dearly.

Her husband and the children made it the best they could and after some time he married

Mrs. Pernie Barham who made him a good wife and was a great mother to the children. She died in March, 1914.

Britt and I finished high school in Clarksville May 17, 1894, and both left school for a while. Brother Charley finished high school in Clarksville and finished a business course at Hill's Business College in Waco.

Brother Jimmie served as tax assessor of Red River County for four years, which brought him and his family from the farm to Clarksville. The rest of us boys were away at work and there was only father and mother and Hontas on the farm. They were not able to care for the farm, so they decided to move to Clarksville. In 1900 they moved into the home here. It was hard for them to adjust themselves to the change, and father was never reconciled to the ways of the city. It was too confining. He worked and made a fine garden, kept his buggy and made many trips back to the farm and to church.

To our great sorrow and loss the home and all burned March 3rd after dark. Through the years that we lived here a number of boys and girls stayed with us and attended school. Galen Miller, mother's nephew, came out from Kentucky and lived with us. He worked in the Red River National Bank. His health failed. He returned to Murray and did not live long.



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This account was written by B.F. Dickson, my beloved cousin, but was [illegible] at the time of his death. This information was compiled by Cousin Frank during the 1930's ... possibly in the late 30's ... he passed away in 1941.

I typed it from his notes written in longhand and on tablet paper in [illegible]. I value it highly and hope that whoever reads it will handle it with care, I consider it very precious information. /s/ Iva Lassiter Hooker

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From census records we know that in 1900 Frank Dickson is living at home (with his father and mother, the John Dicksons) and is a school teacher. On the 1920 census, B.F. Dickson is in Alvarado, minister to a church. In 1921, he marries Ethyl Clyde. In 1930, Berry F. Dickson is a Baptist minister in Lubbock, Texas. A double headstone over the graves in the Clarksville Cemetery, Red River County, has: Rev. B.Franklin Dickson, 1870-1940, E.Clyde Dickson, 1891-1965.

Other bits of interest: Hontas is a Dickson family name for a girl – for Pocahontas! In the original Groves family picture album is a picture of J.B. and Hontas Dickson as children. (Betty Jo

Groves got the album from Ada Groves, Uncle John's wife, and took it to Oregon.) Apparently the Ed Groves family and the John Dickson family exchanged family pictures through the years.

In reference to the nephew Jim Clay that the John Dicksons raised: He is eight years old on the 1880 census, so his parents died around 1872. They came from Collin County, and it should be remembered that Zilpha Dickson Groves died in December 1871 (our records), at the age of 53. Polly Dickson died in 1859 at the age of 42. So, there was almost no family member to take him in but John Dickson.

John J. Baker Dickson died on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, 1908, in Clarksville, Red River County, Texas. His wife died on the 26th.

I was allowed to use the college copying machine and so was able to copy the entire document. In the above I have omitted a few passages which pertained strictly to the Lassiter family – to thereby shorten it somewhat and to keep it more strictly to what might be of interest to the descendents of Uncle John Dickson's sister. For the most part, I kept the original punctuation, but occasionally added a comma. Also, I added the sub-headings. C. Groves

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*Editor's note: this added sketch illustrates the detail of information provided for service in 1847.*

John Baker Dickson was enlisted in the United States army April 10, 1847 at Murray, Kentucky, by First Lieutenant Edward Curd for service in the Mexican War. He enlisted into a company composed primarily of men from the Kentucky counties of Calloway, Marshall, and Ballard, which was commanded by Captain Charles Wickliffe, of Ballard County. This company was designated Company B, Sixteenth United States Infantry, commanded by Colonel John W. Tibbatts. The unit served in northwestern Mexico occupying cities previously captured by General Zachary Taylor's army. After a year's service in Mexico he and his unit were discharged from military service at Newport, Kentucky. His enlistment record gives his surname as "Dickinson," age 20, eyes blue, hair light, complexion fair, height 5' 10", and birthplace Haywood County, Tennessee.